Invitation to Joy

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Date: 20 July 2026

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. You can be seated if you would open your Bible with me please to the book of Philippians.

Philippians, years and years ago, when I was meeting with our pastor's search committee about this role, I was very young back then and didn't pretend to know everything, didn't pretend to have everything figured out.
I certainly did not. The only thing in my mind that I wanted to do if the Lord allowed me the privilege to serve in this role is to be a part of a church where we could gather every Sunday and just open the Bible, study it, and strive to do what it tells us to do.
I had no other agenda other than to just preach the Word. I had no other real conviction other than let's just say, what does God's Word say?
Let's believe it. Let's adjust to it. Let's strive to obey it. And let's just let the Lord do whatever He desires to do. That was a long time ago now.
[1:41] And it is no exaggeration to tell you that I feel not only the same conviction, I feel the same joy every Sunday morning that I have the privilege to come here in this role and just open the Bible and study it and declare what God's Word has said.

It is the greatest joy to my soul to be a member of a church, to belong and to partner with you in a church that truly believes the Bible.
I've never gotten over the joy of that. It's never become mundane to me. I don't take it for granted. In a day where so many churches get off track, in a day where so many churches are experiencing disunity, in a day where so many churches are filled with all kinds of agendas of all sorts, to belong to a church where we believe together that this is God's Word, convince that it is true, and collectively together to say we just want to know God by knowing His Word, to me, is the sweetest joy.
I could not adequately express to you how grateful I am, how thankful I feel to belong as a part of a church who just longs to know Christ more, who just loves to study His Word.
I feel a certain kind of pressure every week. I admit that. I do. Because you come to church hungry for the Word, expecting the Word, and I feel the weight of that.
[3:26] It's a good weight. It's a good pressure. I don't feel any pressure to perform. I don't feel any pressure to be inventive. I don't feel any pressure to be attractional.

I just feel the weight of trying to get it right and to help to lead us into what God has said to us through His Word. And I could not ever tell you how much I thank the Lord for that gift, how much I love you and thank you for that.
And even though those convictions started many, many years ago when I was young, now as a not-so-young guy, I still, every day of my life, feel that conviction that the only reason that anyone should listen to what I say is if what I say comes from the Word.
When I first started here, I was a young man, and I was very aware that no one should listen to me unless I'm just telling you what God has said, and that's still true.
I don't know more than you. I'm not smarter than you. I'm not more gifted than you. I'm not more special than you. I'm none of those things. It's just that God has allowed me the privilege to be able to be the one primarily Sunday after Sunday who is explaining to you what the Bible has said.
[4:51] The only reason you should listen to me is only if what I say to you can be a clear explanation of what God's Word has said. That conviction stays with me every day of my life.

And I get to be a part of a church that believes that. I get to gather with saints every Lord's Day who is convinced that the greatest thing we can do is truly proclaim Christ and to know Him through the

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careful study of His Word.
I'll never get over that. That's never going to be old news to me. And the greatest example that you believe that is Sunday after Sunday to have a Bible open in your lap where you're looking at that and you contest every word I say to say is what He is saying coming from the book.
I hope that my time here has helped you to see that I love you and I care for you and I want to serve you as faithfully as I can but you should never take what I say to be true unless what I say to you can be shown to be an explanation of God's Word.
Because no longevity, no experience, none of those things are worthy of your trust unless it can be shown that it comes from Scripture.
[6:27] which is why what we do in this place is so unique. We gather each Lord's Day and sing songs about the Lord and read Scripture out loud and open our Bibles and study verse by verse, in fact, word by word to say what has God said to us.

And is this not the sweetest place on earth to do that? It's just an unbelievable privilege God has given to us.
For the last 11 months, for us on Sunday mornings, that has primarily meant we are walking through the book of Philippians. For those who have been around a long time, you may remember, Philippians is actually the very first book I ever preached through as pastor here.
Now, that's going back more than two decades ago, a long time ago. And when I preached through it a long time ago, we did so in 12 sermons.
Not that longer is automatically better. Nothing about a longer sermon or a longer series makes it automatically better. But I did long to come back to Philippians again with a little more depth and I pray a little more precision and a little more insight.
[7:57] I still have those notes, though I'm not sure that I opened them once in the last 11 months. I'm not sure I really want to claim those sermons from 25 years ago.

But this book has just been on my heart and I long to lead our church through a careful study through it.
I confess to you, though, it is with a bit of sadness that we come to this day because for me, when you get to the end of preaching a book, it's a bit tough.
I have either read Philippians or been studying, working through Philippians essentially every day since last August. It has been my constant companion, my constant challenge.
And to come to the end of it is a bit sad for me. I pray these 11 months have been helpful. I hope that I have been faithful.
[9:08] I have sure given you everything I've got this last year to help you to see what Philippians is all about. But there is a danger when you walk carefully, verse by verse, through a book of the Bible as we tend to do here for the most part.

And the danger is it's possible that you could come to church every Sunday and hopefully the Bible will be taught carefully and accurately and each message could be helpful, hopefully, and edifying and point you to Christ and enriching for our soul.
And yet, you could get to the end of a long study just because of the length of time and think every Sunday was helpful, every Sunday the Lord ministered to me through His Spirit, but not fully have a clear picture in your mind of what that book is like.
It would take us about 11 minutes to read Philippians out loud and we spent 11 months walking word by word through it. It would be possible to come to the end of these 11 months and say, the last year is helpful for me, but I'm not sure I have the entire picture of Philippians in one shot in my mind.
And so a number of years ago I started doing something I wish I had done 25 years ago, which is when we finish a book to preach one sermon that covers the entirety of the book so that, having examined every tree in the forest as best we can, we can then back up and get a picture of the entire forest together in one snapshot.
[10:52] That's my desire today as we bring our season of study through the book of Philippians to a close. It was about 25 years ago I first taught through Philippians.

I'll be 53 on Friday. If my math is right, we'll do this again when I'm 78. But I'm not sure I'll be here then. I'm not sure you'll be here then.
So, we'll consider this, our final study through Philippians at least for this season in our church. It begins in chapter 1, verse 1, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Christ

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Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Christ. In those opening words, you see a picture of who the church is. We are servants of Christ. We're not stars.
We're not celebrities. We're not influencers. We are to be servants. That's who we all be.
[12:14] Servants of Christ. Saints because we've been redeemed. Saints because we've been called out. Set apart for the use of God.

That's who you are in Christ. You are a servant. You are a saint. Privileged to serve because you've been set apart.
He mentions the overseers and the deacons. Those who serve as teachers and protectors and lead servants in the church.
And I would be remiss if I didn't take this time just to tell you that of all the things I'm thankful for in our church of which I could give you a lengthy list, two of the things I am so grateful to God are for the overseers of this church that I get a chance to serve with and partner with and for the deacons in our church who love Christ and who love you.
I'm so thankful for the men who teach the Word and who serve as your spiritual shepherds, your spiritual teachers, your spiritual defenders.
[13:38] And I am so thankful to serve with a team of deacons who just love to make much of Christ. For me, while these first two verses may feel introductory, they really capture in my heart what I love so much about this local church.

Just servants. We're just a collection of normal people saved by God's grace who love to serve each other, who recognize that our salvation is not our work but all of Christ and the organization through our church is not a bunch of rock stars or a bunch of people who are hungry for power but people who just want to honor Christ.
In chapter 1, we're going to give you an outline that just walks us through these four chapters. Alright? So if you're taking notes, number 1, chapter 1 speaks of confidence in God.
Chapter 1 is all about confidence in God. First, confidence that He is always working. Verse 6, I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ. He's always working in you. Christian, God has not given up on you. He has not put you on the shelf. Stay hopeful. He is working.
[15:12] Verse 12 says, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

Even the parts of Paul's life that feel frustrating or disappointing or far different than he would have on his own preferred them to be, he understands even in the trials, God is at work.
And please hear that, the same is true for you. Even in your difficulty, God is working. Even in your disappointment, God is working. You can have a confidence that says, even when things did not go the way that you hoped that they would, even when family or life or ministry has not progressed the way that you envisioned it going, God has not given up on you and you can be confident, He is always at work in the lives of His people.
And that confidence we have is both in life and in death. Verse 21, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.
Our confidence that we have in God is not only that He will see us through life on this earth, but that when we die as believers, our faith becomes sight and to live is to make every day about Christ and even when we die for the believer, we declare then that is gain because we are with the Lord.
[16:53] Our confidence is in God. And if our confidence is in God in life and in death, let it be said of us that we confess His ways are best.

Verse 27, only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.
We believe His ways are best and because we do with confidence, let us obey His Word. Paul says, whether I'm there or I'm absent, I know what this church is all about.
That resonates with me. After being gone a couple of weeks last month, I had no doubt what was happening in this place while I was away.

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I had no concern about the Word that was being taught. I had no worry about decisions that were being made. I had no fear about ministry being on pause.
[18:17] I am absolutely confident whether I'm here with you or absent for whatever reason, it is with complete confidence I know what this church is doing because the convictions of this church aren't wrapped up in me, they're wrapped up in us collectively saying we are confident in God and we believe His Word.

Chapter 1 says, let the people of God live with confidence in Him. So the question I have for you at the end of chapter 1 is are you trusting the Lord in every aspect of your life?
Are you trusting the Lord in every aspect of your life? Chapter 1 speaks of our confidence in God. Chapter 2 speaks of Christ's example of humility.
Christ's example of humility. verse 5, have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus who, though He was in the form of God, did not have equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Philippians 2 speaks of Christ's example of humility and how we are to live. It says that Christ emptied Himself. He emptied Himself by adding a human nature.
[20:06] Christ is truly God. He can be nothing other than truly God. God. And yet, Christ, with the divine nature, adds to Himself at the incarnation a human nature, and so He emptied by adding so that He could be our perfect example.

We're to live like Him. We're to think like Him. We're to love like Him. We're to serve like Him. And we are to direct all attention unto Him.
Because as the Word tells us in verse 9, God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
Father. Our songs are about Christ. We read Scripture to direct our attention to Christ. Our preaching is to point people to Christ to help you to understand that it is at His name and His name only whereby salvation can be found.
And as believers, we are to follow Christ's example, which is why chapter 2 says, have the mind of Christ. To have the mind of Christ, we have to know Him.
[21:43] We have to know His Word. We have to believe His Word. We have to put His Word into practice. Which is the end of chapter 2 where it gives us two examples of how to do that with Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Christ, our ultimate example, Timothy and Epaphroditus, men just like us, but as role models of how we are to live.
Verse 20, speaking of Timothy, it says, I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. He was compassionate.
Verse 22, you know Timothy's proven worth. Of Epaphroditus, verse 25, it says, he is my brother, my fellow worker, a fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need.
This reminds us that while collectively our goal is to follow Christ's example of humility, God in His kindness has given us role models that we can look to to follow them as they follow Christ.
[23:01] Which is how every one of us ought to seek to live. 1 Corinthians, Paul says, follow, imitate me as I imitate Christ. That's what chapter 2 says, follow Christ, and now here are two role models of Timothy and Epaphroditus of how to do that.

And so we too in our church, we say, follow Christ. And praise God, He has given us so many faithful examples in this church of how to do that.
Children, follow Christ. Teenagers, follow Christ.
To our college students, follow Christ. And every adult in this sanctuary, follow Christ. He is our ultimate that we are following.
Along the way, have some trusted men and women that you look up to, that you respect, that are proven worth to you. Don't idolize them, only worship Christ.
[24:17] Christ. But do look around you for faithful brothers and sisters who will help you by giving you an example of how to think and live like Christ.

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That's chapter two. My question to you from chapter two is, are you living in humility as you serve the Lord and serve others?
Are you living in humility as you serve the Lord and as you serve others? Chapter three speaks of our commitment to pursue Christ.
Our commitment to pursue Christ, we do that by always pressing forward. Verse seven, chapter three, whatever gain I had, I counted as a loss for the sake of Christ.
Verse ten, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible, I may obtain the resurrection from the dead.
[25:26] Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own. Daily, we press on.

God, we keep serving. We keep praising. We keep praising. We stay in the word. We keep gathering for worship.
We keep using our gifts to help each other. We stay focused on what matters most, refusing to be distracted by trends or fads that seek to make man the emphasis and instead say, only Christ will be the head of this church.
And we press on. Day after day and Sunday after Sunday and year after year, let us press on to know more of Christ.
The Old Testament prophets said, let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. Let that be true of us. And as we press on, we do that with hope and with optimism.
[26:48] We do that with belief that God is at work remembering that heaven is our home. Verse 20, our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.

We press on by remembering heaven is our home. There are some saints who last August when we began our study in Philippians 1-1 between then and today have gone to be with the Lord. Their faith has already become sight because heaven is their home. That's true for you if you're in Christ.
Now that's important because our commitment to pursue Christ is strengthened when you remember that earth is not your home. Heaven is.
So when earth gets hard, remember this is not your home. When your body breaks down, remember that your glorified body is coming.
[28:11] When trials stack up and seem to not go away, remember that one day all things are going to be made new. through. And when this world feels dangerous, remember that your citizenship is in heaven.

And when evil feels insurmountable, remember that Christ will subject all things to Himself.
Our commitment to pursue Christ is made strong. because we never forget heaven is our home.
So at the end of chapter 3 I ask you, are you doing what is necessary to make progress in your faith? Are you pursuing Christ?
Are you progressing in your faith? Are you doing what Christians do? are you prioritizing your life how a believer would?
[29:23] Are you obeying the things in Scripture that have been revealed that we understand to do? Are you doing what is necessary to make progress and to grow in your faith?

Chapter 1 speaks of our confidence in God. Chapter 2, Christ's example of humility. Chapter 3, our commitment to pursue Christ. And chapter 4 reminds us of a very important lesson while we wait for the return of Christ and it's this, conflict doesn't stop ministry.
Conflict doesn't stop ministry. As beautiful as chapter 3 ends with heaven and we're with Christ and all things are subjected to Him and our body getting a new glorified body, as beautiful as chapter 3 ends, chapter 4 says, I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women. In the church, there were people who were believers that loved Christ, but they just had conflict with each other.
I'm glad the Holy Spirit gave us these words. Because if these words run in here, we might be tempted to think that churches are supposed to be perfect, and if they're not perfect, then we have an excuse to quit.

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[30:54] Ministry's supposed to be perfect, and if somebody hurts my feelings, I've got an excuse to bail, but understand the Bible doesn't hide the reality of conflict, it's just real, it's inevitable.

Don't let the imperfections of somebody else's life or the imperfections of your own life ever make you comfortable with disobeying what God has clearly called us to do.
This summer, we've had some in our church get married, we've got several others in the next couple of months, some in the next few days, getting ready to get married, and it's an amazing gift to see believers get married.
It's one of my favorite things to do is watch believers get married, and being married is fun. My wife and I have been married 30 years, I highly recommend it if it's God's will for your life to be married. It's not His will for everybody to get married, but for some, if that's the Lord's will for you to get married, it's a wonderful, wonderful gift. Just don't be surprised when conflict comes up.
[31:59] Just don't act surprised to find out that your mate's not perfect. Just don't be surprised that sometimes this person you love with all your heart really can drive you crazy.

In Jesus' name, of course. Conflict's inevitable. Don't let the presence of conflict be an excuse for you to leave your mate.
Don't let the presence of conflict be an excuse for you to quit on the church. conflict doesn't stop ministry. We work through it.
We pray through it. We work through it. We counsel through it. We grow through it. We don't stop.
The two ladies mentioned in chapter 4, verse 2 are real believers.
They love Christ. They're doing gospel work. work. But sometimes somebody else is really hard to get along with.
[33:09] We don't quit. We keep striving. We keep pressing. They're imperfect. We're imperfect. That person who you just don't really connect with really well, they're still a work in progress, and you're still a work in progress.

So what do you do when conflict exists because it absolutely will? Chapter 4, verse 2 reminds us of that, and so we just flip it.
When you're experiencing chapter 4, verse 2, just go back to chapter 2, verse 4. That's what you do. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also to the interest of others.
You serve. You're patient. You're flexible. You're kind. You're forgiving.
Because chapter 4 reminds us as believers, we are in a partnership. relationship. That's what the church is.
[34:21] We're partners together in the work he's called us to do. Verse 10, I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I'm speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low.
I know how to abound in any and every circumstance. I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
In verse 15, he mentions this church who through their giving entered into a partnership with him. the faithful giving of the church was a way they partnered together.
Their confidence was in God in chapter one. And so, they trusted the Lord and demonstrated it through their giving.
[35:33] This is one of the things that should happen every time you give to the Lord through the local church is you are expressing your confidence in God. And you're reminding yourself this is a partnership.

Which is why it's one of God's sweet blessings that the biblical expectation is that the local church, all of us who are a part of the local church, would be faithful to give.
God's love. Because it does two things. It unites our hearts together as we partner to give and it is a way to continually express our dependence upon God.
Instead of just keeping every dollar to yourself and hoarding every dollar for yourself, when we give we're saying, God, I trust you with this. I'm trusting you that you'll take care of my needs.
I'm trusting you that you will help me. Which is exactly what verse 19 says. My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in Christ Jesus.
[36:47] As we looked at last Sunday, the end of the verse, the end of the chapter, the end of the book, just deals with the kindness that ought to be true in the church. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.

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The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
Giving and greeting. Simple ways that we partner together week after week after week to be the church he's called us to be.
Simple things. If this is your church home, partner with us. Help our church be generous and friendly.
Giving and greeting. It's not heroic. No one's going to make much of you for it. The world's not going to be impressed by it.
[37:51] But it's a way that we partner together to show we exist for the glory of God. We partner together as we give week after week after week and as we greet.

It's just simple, faithful, foundational Christian living. Let this church be known for its generosity. Not somebody else, but you.
Join with us. Let our church be known for being kind and compassionate and friendly. Not somebody else, but you take time to greet the saints.
You take time to be friendly. You take time to make this the most loving, caring, compassionate place we can possibly be.
When you get to the end of chapter 4, the question is this. Am I obeying in the simple things I know to be doing? So many people say, but I don't know what God wants from me or I don't know God's will for my life, but let's just start where it's very simple.
[38:59] Where to be faithful to give. Where to be faithful to love each other. Let's just start there. Let's partner together.

Our church needs you and you need your church. Every member has value. Every household matters here. Every one of you have influence over people that nobody else does.
Every one of you needs the ministry and the help that the church offers and provides. church, let's be faithful. We believe that God can help us to do all things He's called us to do.
Verse 13. We believe, verse 19, our God will supply our every need. So let's just continue to partner together and to say, we really believe God. We really do.
And because we do, we're going to give our life away for the sake of Jesus. And if that means I need to teach a class, or I need to greet at this door, or I need to sing in this choir, or I'm going to be faithful to give, and I'm going to pray for these missionaries, and I'll go on that mission trip, and I'll make this visit to the hospital, and I'll go take care of the yard of this widow.
[40:24] Whatever it needs to mean, let's just be a church that just says, we really believe that God's ways are best. We know that heaven is our home, and so let's press on every day that He gives us, and make much of Jesus Christ, and let's show our love for Jesus as we serve His people.

That's the book of Philippians for us. How should I live? It's chapter 1. To live is Christ, to die is gain. How should I think?
That's chapter 2. Have the mind of Christ. How should I progress? That's chapter 3. By pursuing Jesus. And where do I find peace?
That's chapter 4. By trusting in the provision of God. Some 16 times in this short letter, we find this being all about joy.
Go back to chapter 1 and follow quickly along with me. Verse 4. Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy.
[41:35] Verse 18. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.

Verse 25. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and your joy in the faith. Chapter 2, verse 2.
Complete my joy by being of the same mind. Verse 17. Even if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.
Verse 18. Likewise, you should also be glad and rejoice with me. Verse 28. I am more eager to send him therefore that you may rejoice.
Verse 29. Receive him in the Lord with all joy. Chapter 3, verse 1. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me.
[42:37] It is safe for you. Why? Because we rejoice in the Lord. Chapter 4, verse 1. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and I long for my joy and my crown.

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Verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Verse 10. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that you have revived your concern.
All of this is an invitation to joy. This whole letter is one non-stop invitation to find your joy in Christ.
I pray that our time in Philippians this past year has helped your life be held together with joy. convinced that Christ is enough.
I pray that you embrace today the Lord's invitation to joy. Real joy.
[43:51] Lasting joy. joy. A joy that would say to live as Christ. And one day at death I will have greater joy because that will be gain.

And in this we close this season of our church's life in our study of the book of Philippians.
And I pray that our joy is greater because our vision of Christ is clearer. Lord we bow before you this morning in amazement of your grace and of who you are.
Our hope and our prayer is that as a church we would reflect the one that we have worshipped.
How good you've been to us to give us this sweet place this family.
A collection of imperfect people loving to make much of your Son our perfect Savior. May in joy we obey all that you have given to us until the day you call us home.
[45:14] In Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

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